



CITY COUNCILMEMBER  
**RIGEL ROBINSON**  
 DISTRICT 7

CONSENT CALENDAR  
 May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
 From: Councilmembers Rigel Robinson and Ben Bartlett  
 Subject: Budget Referral: Paid Internship Program for Interns of City of Berkeley Councilmembers

RECOMMENDATION

Refer to the budget process to consider an office allowance which would provide stipends to City of Berkeley interns.

BACKGROUND

Despite the fact that some interns work up to 10 hours per week, under current policy, city councilmember interns employed by the City of Berkeley are not paid for their contributions. Current interns serve city councilmembers by bringing a wide range of skills to assist the work of their office and offering an energetic outlook. While interns gain work-experience through this partnership, stipends could help supplement their contributions and increase equity.

Internships provide benefits to employers, who use interns to lower labor costs and screen trainees for potential job offers. City councilmember interns offer significant insight and lessen the labor of their offices.

As student debt continues to grow, it is less feasible for students to partake in unpaid internships in exchange for professional work experience. Students already face an average of \$37,172 in student debt, and as many as 69% of students claim they cannot afford to take an unpaid internship. Over 27 percent of Berkeley undergraduates qualify for the Pell Grant and most of these recipients are from families who make an income of less than \$30,000 a year.

Students oftentimes must choose between getting a job to financially assist their families and/or afford basic necessities and participating in an unpaid internship. Providing paid city councilmember internships to students has the potential to alleviate barriers, by providing more opportunities to first generation, low-income, or minority students, and create a more equitable workplace, by weakening the disproportional benefits in opportunity between financially advantaged and disadvantaged students.

This referral proposes to allocate \$1,500 per year to the offices of each Councilmember and \$3,000 for the office of the Mayor for intern stipends. While the specific allocation of those funds would be at the discretion of each Councilmember, that funding level is

intended to allow for \$500 for each of the Fall, Spring, and Summer academic semesters per Councilmember, and \$1,000 for the Office of the Mayor.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The total cost of creating an office allowance to provide stipends would be approximately \$15,000 per year.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

No impact.

CONTACT PERSON

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Aoife Megaw and Jihee Yoon, Interns to Councilmember Rigel Robinson